

China Could Help Mitigate Tension In Korean Peninsula - Najib

From M. Saraswathi

MANILA, April 30 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said China could play a bigger role in mitigating the escalating tension in the Korean Peninsula, which is a major concern in the region at present.

The Prime Minister said ASEAN should find ways and means to reduce tension as civil rattling or nuclear rattling was not a good thing because it caused fear among the people that something could be wrong and could be a huge catastrophe of unimaginable proportion.

Looking at various options, including whether China can play a bigger role to persuade North Korea to change its rather belligerent position to become much more accommodating of the wishes of the global community.

And return to the six-party talks or at least stop firing ballistic missiles for some time now, Najib said when asked on ASEAN leaders feedback on the issue at the end of the 30th Asean Summit today.

Six-party talks among South Korea, North Korea, United States, China, Japan and Russia aim to find peaceful resolution to the security concerns as a result of the North Korean nuclear weapons programme.

He said many quarters had expressed concern over the escalating tensions in the Korean Peninsula, including the Philippines.

We hope the parties concerned that are influential there can play a role so that North Korea does not cause excessive provocation that can cause any unwanted incidents later, he said.

The issue of North Korea took centre stage at the Summit held in Metro Manila.

Earlier, the host country's President, Rodrigo Duterte had also expressed his concern saying that ASEAN was worried over the North Korean issue.

He stressed the fact that the first victim of nuclear warhead would be Asia and ASEAN countries.

Hence, it behooves upon the United States (US) which wields the biggest stick just to really be prudent and patient, Duterte said at the press conference at the end of the first of two leader level summit the Philippines will host as chairman of ASEAN this year.

The US should be prudent and patient in dealing with North Korea whose leader relishes letting go of his missiles, he said, adding that he was waiting for a phone call from the U.S President, Donald Trump.

According to reports, the two leaders spoke at around 11pm on Saturday but details of the conversation was not made available at the time the story was written.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Najib also reiterated Malaysia's stand on Code of Conduct (COC) and was optimistic that it is finalised and adopted by the end of the year.

"The CoC is to be legally binding for all parties to ensure continuous peace and stability in the South China Sea," he said.

The CoC was mooted following overlapping claims on certain areas in the South China Sea.

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